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OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH  
DE RUEHGO #1019/01 2881005

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6681

INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0598

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4129

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7688

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5247

RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1129

RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1030

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001019

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO  
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: BURMA: REGIME GUTS PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

REF: A. RANGOON 986

1B. RANGOON 1018 AND PREVIOUS

RANGOON 00001019 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

11. (C) Summary: Prominent 88 Generation Students leader Htay Kywe was arrested October 13 along with four other pro-democracy activists. American Center students continue to be detained and arrested, and the leader of the Tuesday Prayer Campaign has been confined to her township for one year. Embassy Rangoon has documented 369 arrests and 25 releases; though we believe hundreds more remain in detention. We estimate between 30-50 persons were killed in the demonstrations or died afterwards in detention. At Prime Minister Soe Win's funeral October 14, Senior General Than Shwe appeared in poor health and "out of it," according to diplomats in attendance. End summary.

12. (C) Despite the regime's message to the international community that it has cooperated with the UN and the situation in Burma has returned to normal, the authorities continue their systematic arrests of pro-democracy activists.

Early on the morning of October 13, over seventy police surrounded the Rangoon hideout of 88 Generation Students leader Htay Kywe and arrested him and four other members of the organization. Htay Kywe was the most prominent 88GS leader still at large and a key leader of the pro-democracy movement. He has been one of the Embassy's closest contacts and had been communicating with us regularly up until his arrest.

13. (SBU) Another pro-democracy activist, Naw Ohn Hla, was also detained on Friday, October 12. Naw Ohn Hla was the leader of the Tuesday Prayer Campaign, a group of pro-democracy activists who visited Rangoon's Shwe Dagon Pagoda every Tuesday to pray for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. Naw Ohn Hla contacted the Embassy this morning to tell us she had been released from detention but informed she was confined to her Township for one year. The restriction on her movement will prevent her from leading the Tuesday Prayer Campaign or participating in future demonstrations.

¶4. (C) American Center students continue to be targeted. Three members of our Youth and Students Book Club were arrested last week. Others were brought in for questioning. Overall numbers of arrested, detained, and released are everyone's best guesses. The last official numbers we received from the regime were given to the Charge d'Affaires during her meeting in Nay Pyi Taw on October 5 (Ref A). Embassy Rangoon has documented 369 arrests, and 25 releases. We are convinced that several hundred remain in detention. Conversations with participants of and witnesses to the demonstrations, as well as with detainees who have been released, lead us to believe between thirty and fifty people were killed during the demonstrations or died of injuries in detention. Many of our contacts continue to complain that the UN is not doing enough to push the regime to free the activists or allow ICRC to conduct visits to the prisons.

¶5. (C) Charge chose not to attend Prime Minister Soe Win's funeral nor to sign the condolence book. Soe Win is also known as the "Butcher of Depayin" for orchestrating the brutal attack on Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD in 2003. Soe Win's unit was also responsible for leading the 1988 crackdown. The names and photos of those attending the funeral were prominently printed in the newspapers. The EU Ambassadors decided to sign the condolence book but did not attend the funeral. Diplomats who attended the PM's funeral on Sunday told us Senior General Than Shwe attended for only twenty minutes and departed before the beginning of the traditional Buddhist ceremony conducted by monks. All reported that Than Shwe appeared in ill health and "out of it" and had to be assisted by aides and his wife. Rumors are flying through Rangoon that the astrologers are predicting the fall of Than Shwe and the rise of Aung San Suu Kyi by the end of the year. Three large cracks have reportedly emerged on the replica of the Shwe Dagon Pagoda the generals were building in Nay Pyi Taw, a bad omen indeed.

RANGOON 00001019 002.2 OF 002

¶6. (C) Comment: While the generals publicly emphasize their cooperation with Gambari's mission, they continue to defy the UN by their continuing arrests of political activists and failure to move forward on any dialogue. As the generals continue to systematically hunt down the pro-democracy activists and try to consolidate power in military hands, the international community should publicly protest to show the military leaders that they will not accept status quo ante. Although the UN Resident Coordinator was displayed signing the condolence book and attending Soe Win's funeral, he has been silent about the regime's continued flouting of UN recommendations. This silence about the continuing regime abuses has caused the UN as an institution to lose credibility. End comment.

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